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August 17, 2007

TO: Each Health Deputy  
FROM: Paul Simon, M.D., M.P.H.  
Director, Division of Chronic Disease and Injury Prevention  
SUBJECT: Update—Request for Proposals for Chronic Disease Prevention

As you know, the Board of Supervisors has allocated funding of approximately \$750,000 for a Request for Initiatives (RFI) related to chronic disease prevention. The RFI was announced at the May 2nd *Built Environment and Public Health Workshop* hosted by the Chronic Disease and Injury Prevention Division. This memo describes the background and purpose of the RFI, how the RFI will be advertised, its release date, examples of possible initiatives (Attachment 1), and a tentative schedule of events (Attachment 2).

Background

Over the last ten years, the average weight of Los Angeles County adults has steadily increased and has been accompanied by dramatic increases in the rates of obesity and diabetes. A similar trend has been seen among children in the county. Obesity in childhood can lead to adverse health effects such as hypertension, type 2 diabetes, and insulin resistance. Engaging in regular physical activity is one of the most effective ways to prevent many chronic conditions including obesity, diabetes mellitus, cardiovascular disease, colon cancer, hypertension, osteoporosis, and depression. However, almost half of LA County adults do not get recommended levels of physical activity and 38% define themselves as inactive. These sedentary lifestyles have a profound impact on the rates of premature death and disability in the county.

Even small improvements in physical activity significantly reduce risk of developing a chronic disease; in fact, the greatest improvements in health status are seen when people who are least fit become even moderately physically active. In order to achieve these potential gains for the broadest number of people, we need to make it easy for people to be physically active. For example, recreational activities such as going to the gym require a high level of motivation and may not be sustained over time. But communities where residents can easily walk to the store and their children

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can walk or bike to school help integrate regular physical activity into people's daily routines.

Evidence suggests that improving the built environment is an effective way to increase physical activity among residents. Improvements to community and street level design, such as making it safe and pleasant to walk in a neighborhood through improved street lighting, traffic calming measures, and sidewalks or walking trails, are effective strategies for increasing physical activity.

#### Purpose

The purpose of the RFI is to promote changes in the built environment that make it easy for people to incorporate physical activity into their daily lives. Eligible bidders include cities, schools, community based organizations, and private, for profit organizations. Grantees will develop and maintain interdisciplinary partnerships that will promote policy change in areas such as land use, zoning, street standards, general plans, joint use agreements and safe ways to walk/bike to schools. Grantees will also work to improve the built environment through a physical project related to their policy change initiative, such as creating bike lanes, sidewalks, crosswalks, trails, traffic calming measures, or green space. In addition, grantees will partner with existing community-based programs to ensure that new bike paths, trails and other environmental improvements will be used to the fullest extent by the community. In this way, the RFI and ensuing grantee efforts will complement health promotion and education efforts already being conducted by Public Health and community-based organizations.

For examples of the types of proposals eligible for funding, please see *Attachment I: Examples of Possible Initiatives*.

#### Advertising

The RFI will be advertised in newspapers and newsletters throughout the County. Additionally, over 1,500 individuals—including city staff, non-profit employees, and business personnel—will be notified via mail and email of the RFI release. The RFI will also be posted on the Department of Public Health website at [www.lapublichealth.org/place](http://www.lapublichealth.org/place).

#### Release Date

The RFI is being released on August 17, 2007. This date takes the school calendar into consideration, as we hope to attract grant proposals from schools or community based organizations that work with schools. Such proposals might include plans to use the Safe Routes to School model, a nationally recognized and evidence-based initiative that has increased physical activity levels among children by promoting safe walking and bicycling environments near schools.

Please feel free to share this memo with deputies concerned with planning, land use and transportation issues. If you or any of your colleagues have questions or would like additional information, please call me, at (213) 351-7825, or Jean Armbruster, Director of the PLACE Program, at (213) 351-7313.

PS:ja

c: John Schunhoff  
Attachment

## Attachment 1: Examples of Possible Initiatives

### Initiative Example 1: Community-Based Organization Applicant

Community-based organization A, a non-profit based in a low-income neighborhood of the city, forms a partnership with the city, business associations and other community-based organizations to create a four-mile community walking and biking path along unused rail lines running through the community. The community-based organization feels confident in gaining community support for the initiative because a preliminary assessment revealed that some neighborhood residents currently walk along the rail lines due to the shortage of parks. The partnership will focus its policy change efforts on transferring the right-of-way from a railroad company to the city. Community-based organization A will engage neighborhood residents in designing the key aspects of this much needed linear park and how to link it to major public transit stops. For its physical project, the partnership will improve the current walkability of the rail lines by installing cross walks at three major intersections to improve safety. To promote more physical activity along the rail lines and address issues of neighborhood safety, the partnership will link with a local YMCA that organizes walking clubs in the area.

### Initiative Example 2: City Applicant

City B has recognized a community need for more walking and biking routes. The city teams up with a local community-based organization that has a strong reputation for promoting pedestrian and bicycle safety. The partnership will create a new city-wide policy promoting "complete streets"—streets that are designed to meet the needs of all users – not just vehicles. This policy change effort will entail working with city planners, engineers and transportation experts to revise the city's zoning codes and design standards to emphasize safe access for pedestrians and cyclists.

For its physical project, the partnership will work with community residents, organizations and businesses in one neighborhood where the streets are particularly unfriendly for cyclists. The physical project will add bike lanes along a major boulevard. The partnership plans to link with a local community-based organization that will organize group ride programs and distribute bicycle safety items such as helmets.

### Initiative Example 3: School Applicant

The Principal from Elementary School C creates a partnership with the city and a local community-based organization dedicated to increasing physical activity among children. The partners organize parents, students, and teachers to conduct a number of walk audits to determine the current status of pedestrian routes to the school. Their walk audits reveal several impediments to safe walking, including speeding cars, dangerous intersections and inadequate sidewalks. The partnership believes that all elementary school students in the district should have the opportunity to walk or bike to school and decides to seek a school board policy proclaiming that Safe Routes to School be established within five years for all elementary schools. Once the policy is passed, the partnership will help establish Safe Routes to Schools programs district wide, including at Elementary School C. This policy change effort will include capacity building activities in individual schools within the district to help promote and implement the Safe Routes to School programs.

The walk audits also identified one intersection two blocks from Elementary School C that is particularly unsafe for children. For its physical project, the partnership will work with the city's public works and transportation departments to narrow the streets of the intersection, increase the crossing time and install count-down numbers on green lights. The partnership will link with a local community-based organization to organize "walking school bus" events to encourage groups of parents and children to walk together to school as well as teach pedestrian and bike safety in school classrooms. In addition, the

partnership will collaborate with the local police department to increase foot patrols along the route students take to school during pre-school and after-school hours to address safety concerns.

### Additional Examples of Policy Change Efforts and Related Physical Projects

Examples of Policy Change Efforts	Examples of Related Physical Projects
Develop a health element in a city's general plan OR incorporate health policy goals into existing general plans OR create a pedestrian or bicycle master plan, OR adopt a pedestrian charter to promote safe walking in a city	Place signs that indicate location of trailheads; or provide secure bike storage and other pedestrian and cyclist facilities including showers and lockers etc., or provide attractive and safe streetscapes through lighting, landscaping, and signage
Establish neighborhood traffic calming plans throughout the jurisdiction to slow traffic and maintain neighborhood safety	Develop traffic calming measures including traffic circles and medians
Develop "complete streets" initiatives that call for accommodating all users of the road	Increase walkability and pedestrian safety by widening sidewalks; developing pedestrian islands; or narrowing major boulevards; OR enhance bike access by developing or improving bike lanes
Institute policies that create a safe, connected street network	Link an existing pedestrian walkway with a city park and improve lighting for added security, or create a regional bicycle/pedestrian network to link neighborhoods, commercial areas, parks, & schools
Improve access to public transportation (more transit options, more routes, improved service, incentives, etc.) and develop transportation policies that get people out of their cars	Improve public transit by providing shelters, benches, lighting, bike racks, or other improvements to transit stops
Revise development codes, zoning ordinances or design guidelines and implement them in new projects so that residents can easily get around without a car	Create unique, mixed-use commercial centers or districts close to residential areas or create local walking destinations, such as a plaza or downtown area for events
Develop and implement Safe Routes to Schools programs, including seeking city/district policy support for the program city/district wide	Provide crosswalk striping, stop signs, and traffic signals to calm traffic around school
Develop joint-use/community-use* agreements with schools to extend use of physical activity space such as playgrounds and fields to the public; and secure funding for maintenance, utilities, security etc.	Make school playground improvements and open them up for community use after hours
Ensure that parks, trails and greenways are included in master plans and establish new green space within walking distance of residential areas	Develop new or existing green spaces in a community that increase access to physical activity opportunities
Develop "railbanking" or land acquisition agreements to convert old rail corridors to trails	Convert old rail corridors to walking paths or trails
Develop mixed-use and transit oriented development policies that locate affordable housing in proximity to transit hubs	Build sidewalks, bike lanes, or trails that link affordable housing and transit hubs or create green space near affordable housing